

Starting From Scratch: One County's Approach to Childhood Obesity

The Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHS) supports small Lincoln county in the eastern part of Washington State. It is home to 10,600 people, including 1,923 children under age 15.¹ In 2011, the health of these children became the catalyst for change. A change that transformed how many agencies did business.

Issue

In Lincoln County, 18 percent of eighth grade students are overweight and 10 percent are obese.² Most eighth grade students also report not eating enough daily fruits and vegetables.² The Lincoln County Health Department knew this was a public health problem that needed community partnering.

Intervention

Jolene Erickson, public health nurse, reached out to her colleagues at the neighboring Davenport Clinic, the local hospital across the street, and the school down the road. Ed Dzedzy, administrator at the Lincoln County Health Department led the process to apply for funding. In 2011, this Lincoln County team became only one of ten in the country to receive a grant and national training from the National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality's Healthy Weight Collaborative. Soon after, the Lincoln County Health Department was also funded by the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant through the Healthy Communities Program at the Washington State Department of Health. The health department, school district, and hospital district formed *54321 Let's Go LinCo!* to market the healthy improvements happening in Lincoln County.

The partnership identified improvements each agency could make for the health of Lincoln County children. The primary care providers at the Davenport Clinic began taking children's height and weight measurements during physicals. They also educated the child's caregivers about nutrition. The Davenport school sent letters home reporting on each child's hearing, vision, Body Mass Index, and health status. While parents appreciated these letters, they also asked for help. "What are you doing at our schools?" was the response during a parent night organized to discuss the recent changes. With support from the Davenport School Board, the health department received a grant from the Empire Health Foundation. This grant funded school kitchen staff from Davenport to attend a national *Culinary Boot Camp*. There they learned how to make healthy meals for the children in their schools.

Impact

Odessa and the town of Reardan recently followed Davenport's example. The clinic, hospital, and school district in each town has enhanced their health records and sent letters to parents. The city of Davenport has also appointed a wellness coordinator. The lunches at the Davenport School District are now made largely from scratch. Meals also include more vegetables and fruit. During one recent lunch period, a child held up a pear and asked what it was. He had never seen a pear outside of a can. The Lincoln County Commissioners and Board of Health are committed to funding these efforts. Their ultimate goal? Bring the *Cook for America Culinary Boot Camp* to Lincoln County and train every school to start from scratch.

Contact:

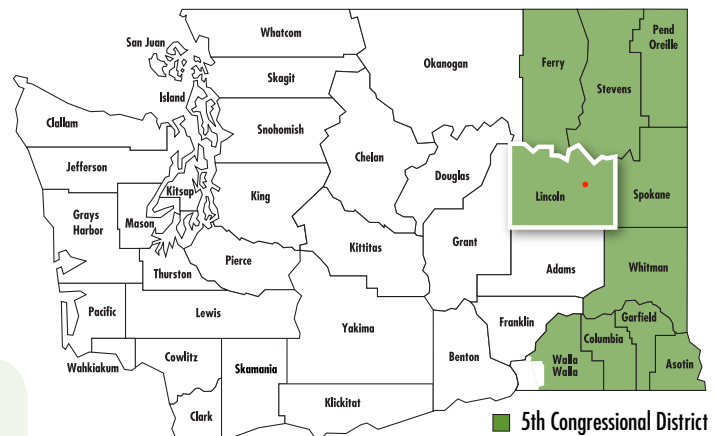
Danielle Kenneweg, PHHS Block Grant Coordinator
Danielle.Kenneweg@doh.wa.gov
360-236-3782

County population:¹ 10,600

Lincoln County Health Department

Davenport, Washington

<http://www.co.lincoln.wa.us/Health%20Department/>



¹ Lincoln County: Washington State Data Book, Lincoln County, 2011. Date posted 8/11/2011. www.ofm.wa.gov/databook/pdf/local.pdf. Website accessed on 2/4/13.

² Healthy Youth Survey Factsheets "AskHYS.net." www.askhys.net/layout.asp?page=reports/FactSheets. Website accessed on 1/28/13.